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*The Nature of the Pastoral Office; or,
The Apostle Peter's Exhortation to the
Elders of the Church, briefly consider'd.*

A
SERMON,

Preach'd at

WIMBORNE in ESSSEX,

May 7th, 1725.

At the publick Ordination of Mr. JOHN
TREN, and Mr. BENJAMIN OWEN.

By W. HARRIS.

*Publiſh'd at the Deſire of the Miniſters
and Gentlemen who were preſent.*

L O N D O N:

Printed for RICHARD FORD, at the Angel
in the Poultry, near Stocks-Market. 1725.

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The Apostle's Exhortation to the
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ON GER 31: 1-3

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Published at the Desire of the Ministers
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Printed for R. and J. B. at the Angel
in the Strand, near St. Dunstons Church.



TO
Sir STRANGE JOCELINE, Bart.

OF
Hide-Hall in Hertfordshire.

S I R,



YOU were a Witness to the Solemnity of that Day, in which the following Discourse was deliver'd, and of which it made a Part.

'Tis to be hop'd the Presence of God will never forsake our Assemblies, while younger Persons of such a Spirit and Furniture are rising up, under all our Disadvantages, for the Service of the Sanctuary.

It was the Opinion of every one who desir'd this Publication, that it should be inscrib'd to your worthy Name; who have never been ashamed to own the Cause of serious Religion,

DEDICATION.

and christian Liberty; but been long a great Example and Patron of them; and which in a Gentleman of Honour and Fortune, who had a liberal Education at home, and had seen the World abroad, could not be the effect of Chance or Humour; but the Result of deliberate Judgment and Experience.

I hope nothing will be found in the following Discourse, which can justly offend, or be thought improper; by any who consider the Ottrage of it, and are content to allow the Liberty of a free and candid Debate.

May the divine Blessing remain in your House for the Sake of the Ark of God, which you entertain in it, to the Advantage of many round about you; and your hoary Head in the way of Righteousness, be long continu'd as a Crown of Glory in this World; and may you receive the Crown of Glory which never fades away in the other.

This, Sir, is the sincere Prayer of,

Your most respectful,

Humble Servant,

W. HARRIS.





1 Peter v. 1, 2, 3, 4.

The elders which are among you, I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ; and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed;

Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

Neither as being lords over Gods heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.



THAT this epistle was not written from *Rome*, but from *Babylon in Egypt*; is the opinion of the best critics. It appears by several passages in it, that it was not written to the idolatrous Gentiles, nor the native

Pearson Ch.
viii. Dis. 6.

rive Jews; but to the gentile converts : And was design'd to encourage them to constancy, under the persecutions to which they were expos'd; and to excite them to holiness of conversation, suitable to the profession they made. In the former chapter, the Apostle had laid down the general rules of duty, with relation to the christian life, and to their suffering state; in this chapter he proceeds to give more particular directions to the elders or ministers among them: *The elders which are among you, I exhort, &c.* The words consist of four distinct parts.

I. The character of the persons to whom it is directed: *The elders which are among you.*

II. The account he gives of himself: *Who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory to be revealed, v. 1.*

III. The exhortation itself: *To feed the flock of God, taking the oversight thereof; not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but ensamples to the flock, v. 2, 3.*

IV. The

IV. The encouragement propos'd, or the motive to a suitable regard: *And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory, which fadeth not away, v. 4.*

I shall a little distinctly represent and consider each.

I. The *character* of the persons to whom the exhortation is directed: *The elders which are among you* *πρεσβυτερος* presbyters. The word originally signifies no more than an elder in years, or seniority, in distinction from younger persons. So the elders among the Jews are called by the LXX, and we read in this sense of the *elders of the people* *πρεσβυτεροι το λαου*. *So the Apostle distinguishes; Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father, and younger men as brethren.* And elders here are oppos'd to younger, in v. 5. *Likewise the younger submit yourselves to the elder.* But the word is generally applied in the New Testament to a particular order of men, in distinction from the church, or people; who were set apart to the special work of preaching the Gospel, and administering the ordinances of divine worship; and are otherwise called *Pastors* and *Teachers*, and *Bishops*, or *Overseers*; of which there was always one at least

Matt. xxi. 23.

least in every christian society, or gospel church, either appointed by the Apostles, or chosen by the christian community.

And that presbyters and bishops are one and the same order of ministry, and not a different order, in the stile of the New Testament; will appear if we consider the scripture account of the matter, or the different schemes which have been laid to evade the force of it. I shall give a brief view of each.

I. If we consider the *Scripture* account of the matter, we find the *Names* are common to both, and promiscuously us'd of the same persons; which would be very improper, and naturally breed confusion, and lead into mistake, if they were distinct orders; because, however the higher order might fitly enough include the lower, and bishops might be called presbyters; as the Apostle here stiles himself one; yet the lower would not include the higher, and he who was only a presbyter, ought never to be called a bishop, if they were really distinct Things; any more than a meer presbyter might be called an apostle. To this purpose we find the Apostle calls the *elders of the church* of Ephesus, Acts xx. 17. *πρεσβυτερος*, *overseers* or *bishops of the flock* 28. v. *ἐπίσκοπος*.
 Tit. i. 5, 7. The Apostle directs Titus to *ordain elders in every city*, *πρεσβυτερος*; and adds immediately

mediately concerning the same persons;
If any be blameless;—for a bishop must be blameless, τὸν ἐπίσκοπον; which would be no reason if presbyters and bishops were different persons; and would render the apostle's discourse impertinent and un-concluding; as much as if I should say, a deacon must be *apt to teach*, for an elder, or presbyter must be so. And in the Text the *elders*, πρεσβυτέρους, whom the Apostle exhorts in v. 1. are requir'd to *feed the flock, taking the oversight of them*, v. 2. ποιμάνετε ἐπισκοπῶντες, act the *bishops* over them. Besides, their *work* was common, and one and the same, without any mark of distinction, or pre-heminence, or dividing it into parts, and restraining any of them to one: they had both the same work and office in the christian church; for they were to *take heed to the flock, and feed the church of God, and take the oversight of it*: To look after their proper charge by suitable instruction and care. They were to exercise christian discipline, and govern and rule among them; the elders were both *to rule well, and to labour in the word and doctrine*. And they had ^{1 Tim. v;} the *rule over them*, and were to be ^{17.} *obey'd, who spake to them the word of the Lord, and watched for their Souls.* ^{Heb. xiii. 7.} ^{17.} They laid on hands in the ordination

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of ministers, or separation to their peculiar office: The *teachers* as well as *prophets*, in the church of *Antioch*, separated *Barnabas and Saul* for the work of the ministry. And the apostle speaks expressly of the *laying on of the hands of the presbytery*; i. e. the collection or college of presbyters, as the word always signifies in the new testament, and in the most antient writers. And tho' the apostle speaks in another place of *the laying on of his hands* upon *Timothy*: if that refers to his ordination, and not rather to the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, which were convey'd by the hands of the apostle; it only shews the concurrence of both in the same act, not the appropriation of it to one of them. The same *qualifications* are required in both, none of them distinct and peculiar to one. The apostle requires of a bishop, that *he be blameless, the husband of one wife; vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but patient, no brawler, not covetous, one who rules well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; not a novice.* The very same things are required in an elder; he must be *blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful*

Act. xiii. 2.

1 Tim. iv. 14.

2 Ep. i. 6.

1 Tim. iii. 2.

Tit. i. 7. 9.

*faithful children, &c. They must both know how to rule their own house, and have obedient or faithful children; that they may take care of the church of God. And if the bishop and elder are distinct persons, the apostle has neglected the description of the highest order of the christian ministry, at the same time, he particularly describes the qualifications of the lower; namely, that of elders and deacons. They were separated, and set a-part to their office the same way, without any mark of difference, much less by a distinct ordination to each. * They were invested in their office, and received their commission, the same way, and at the same time. The Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them; and when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. And Barnabas and Paul, ordained elders in every church where they came, and prayed with fasting, and commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. And Timothy, tho' an evangelist, or assistant to the apostles in planting churches; was ordained by the laying on of the hands of the presbyters. We read of no*

Act. xiii. 2.

— iv. 23.

Χριστοτοστον

1 Tim.
iv. 14.

* Quia episcopi & presbyteri una ordinatio est, cum sit uterq; sacerdos. *Ambros.*

other way of separation to the gospel ministry, but by fasting and prayer, and laying on of hands; there is no instance or example in all the Scripture of any other kind, or without this.

To conclude this matter, the *extent* of their charge is the same, or the object of their care and oversight; they had the same charge committed to them, which was the flock of God, *or* christian church; every presbyter or bishop had his proper flock, which he was to *feed*, and take the *oversight* of, and *watch for their* souls. They had no larger a cure than they were capable of exercising the pastoral office over in these instances: we find no bishops over many churches, or over other presbyters; but they were each one to take the care of the particular church, over which he did preside. *Elders were ordain'd in every church.*

Act. xiv.
23.

And now if there were any real difference between them, especially so great a one as some pretend; it would certainly appear by some distinguishing title, or peculiar part of their proper office; by a distinct ordination, or qualification for it, or the extent of their cure: and if there appear nothing of any of these, but on the contrary, they are each common to both, in all the Scripture account;

count; we may safely conclude, they are not different, but one and the same.

I shall further observe, that tho' every church had its own pastor or bishop, who presided over them in the Lord, and had the entire care and government of them; yet in larger congregations and populous cities, upon the increase of the christian church; there were several presbyters in one church, one of which, usually the eldest, or most eminent, was the proper bishop or pastor; and the other assisting presbyters, who acted not without his direction and consent; and he was ordinarily the præses or moderator in their church assemblies, for order sake. * But that any one was superior in order and authority, the one bearing rule, and the other subject to him; the one only ordaining elders, and the other not; the one the pastor of a particular flock, the other having the oversight of many; there appears not any footsteps in all the new testament, and seems introduced in after ages, when the christian church grew more populous, and pride and ambition, and the love of power and preheminance, so agreeable to human nature, began to rise and prevail in it; and was cherish'd and countenanc'd by the favour of the civil powers, when the empire became christian.

And

* προσώτης
πρεσβύτερος
1 Tim. v.
17.

And this account of the scripture is supported by the earliest monuments of the christian church, after the writings of the new testament. I shall only instance in a single passage out of two of the most antient and venerable. *Clemens Romanus* speaks of the office of a presbyter as an episcopate, and says expressly, that the presbyters of Corinth were cast out of their bishopricks, or episcopal offices. And *Ignatius* always speaks of his bishop, as the pastor of a particular church, and having *one temple, one altar*, or communion-table. I readily own after all, that many persons of excellent worth and usefulness in the christian church in after ages, as well as many in the present, have apprehended the matter otherwise, and carried their claims higher; tho' I think the opinion of a distinct order was not the sense of the first reformers here in *England*; and does not prevail at this day in far the greatest part of the reformed world. Thus then the matter stands in the Scripture account; but this will farther appear if we consider in the next place,

II. The different *schemes* which have been laid to evade the force of it, and which seem so many hypotheses devised to support a cause, and wanderings from the
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the plainness and simplicity of the gospel. Thus for example, 'tis more generally suppos'd, that the apostles were bishops, distinct from elders and deacons, and constituted the third order in the Scripture times. This is indeed true, but comes not up to the case; for the apostles were extraordinary and temporary officers in the christian church; and their whole power, as apostles, ceased with their persons, and with the reason of their institution; as it was entirely owing to the extraordinary circumstance of that time. They were personal witnesses of Christ's resurrection, upon which the truth of christianity so much depended; were endowed with extraordinary and miraculous *gifts*, and employ'd to plant the gospel in the whole world; they were not fix'd and settled ministers to any particular flock, but universal bishops, and ministers to the whole christian church. They were appointed and qualified for a special and extraordinary purpose, and nothing remains in the christian church, but their ordinary and standing power, which was common to them with other presbyters: and they who pretend to succeed them in any part of their apostolical office, have it to prove, that any branch of their office, as apostles, continues; and that they

were ever fix'd ministers, and confin'd to any part of the christian church. *

D. Ham. in
Annot. &
de jure E-
piscopatus

Others therefore suppose, that presbyters in the scripture were proper bishops; and so there were only *bishops and deacons*, according to the apostles inscription to the church of *Philippi, chap. I. 1.* and that proper presbyters were afterward appointed by the bishops at the direction of the apostles; but as there is no shadow of proof of presbyters being bishops in the exclusive sense, or of a distinct order; and if presbyters and bishops were the same thing in the Scripture times, as we have before shewn; there was no need of appointing them after-

* There is no more pretence that *James* was bishop of *Jerusalem*, in this sense, than that *Peter* was bishop of *Rome*; and for the same reason: because the commission to the apostles was to *teach all nations, and go into all the world*; to convert the jewish and gentile world to christianity: this was their proper and full employment. And tho' *James* was present at *Jerusalem* with the rest of the apostles, that no more proves that he was a fixed bishop there, than that any other of the apostles were so, who were present as well as he. There is no mark of preheminance in the whole relation, or that he was so much as *præses* of the assembly: *Act xv. 6,* It was the *apostles and elders* came together to consider the Matter. *23.* *Peter* first opened the debate; then *Barnabas* and *Paul* spake; and lastly *James* gave his *sentence*, or opinion as the rest had done before him: And in the close, *it pleased the apostles and elders with the whole church* to send *chosen men*, and write a letter by them to *Antioch*. As for some of the antients who call him *bishop of Jerusalem*, the expression is neither of a determinate sense, or undoubted authority.

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wards; so I demand where and when the appointment was made? How unlikely is it, that when the apostle gave so particular direction to *Timothy* and *Titus*, what officers to appoint in every christian church, namely, *elders* and *deacons*; that he should give further powers afterward to other bishops, to institute another office, and which no where appears neither? This is plainly *gratis dictum*, and the whole pretence arbitrary and unreasonable.

Again others allow, that there were only presbyters and deacons in the scripture times; but that bishops were instituted afterwards by apostolical appointment, to succeed in the government of the church, and to ordain elders: and the great reason for it is, that this disposition of things generally prevail'd in all the christian churches so soon after. But this opinion gives up the question in debate, and allows there were only two orders of ministry in the scripture times; and it would be strange the christian church should be without one order, and that so principal a one, in the very first and purest age. And that the order of bishops, as distinct from presbyters, was by apostolical institution afterwards; is only suppos'd and presum'd, without any direct evidence and proof;

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and that bishops in the first ages of christianity were no more than presbyters or pastors of particular churches; is evident by the scripture account, and the testimony of the first christian writers.

To conclude, some yield that bishops and presbyters are indeed one order, and have equal powers belonging to their office; but that the distinction is made by the civil powers, together with their honours and emoluments; or by the agreements and constitution of the christian church, for orders sake. The power of ruling and ordaining is an inherent right in every presbyter; only the exercise of it is confin'd to particular persons, by the civil government, or ecclesiastical canons; and so is only a wise institution to preserve order and peace. But then, as this yields the cause of divine appointment, so where the rights of presbyters are not denied, but allowed; tho' I know no power to confine and restrain the exercise of it, nor any convenience and advantage in it; yet, how far it might be lawful to submit for peace sake, when it is lodg'd in proper hands, is worth considering: and this is the sense, not only of some moderate episcopal divines, but of the ablest lawyers concerning the *English* constitution; who say, that the law makes
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men bishops, and can unmake them again. I am sensible I have dwelt too long on this branch of the subject, and run to a disproportionate length. I proceed,

II. To the account the apostle gives of himself; and he represents himself under a threefold character, each of which was exceeding proper to engage attention, and enforce his exhortation.

I. He describes himself by his office; *who am also a presbyter* *ὁ καὶ πρεσβύτερος*. He was a fellow elder, and one of their own order and rank, who had the same office, and bore the same character with them: he speaks with modesty of himself, tho' he were indeed of an higher order; so the apostle *John* styles himself *ὁ πρεσβύτερος*. 2 Ep. 1. One cannot but observe here the strange difference from the papal stile in this humble exhortation of the apostle. Here is no pretence to primacy, or claim of superiority and dominion: He calls himself a fellow presbyter, and in some respect their equal. This was a wise, as well as a kind address, and proper to recommend his advice with the greater force, and engage the more kindly regards to it. He condescends to bespeak them in the language of an equal, and as one upon a level with themselves; however, superior in other respects. 'Tis as if he had

Philem. v. 8. said, I beseech you, who am one of you, and with the kindness and affection of a brother and a friend; not with the authority of an apostle, but as a fellow minister with you: *Tho' I might be bold in Christ, and enjoin thee; yet for loves sake I rather beseech thee.* So the Roman generals us'd to bespeak their soldiers, when they were going to action, with the endearing appellation of *commilitones*, or fellow soldiers.

2. By the high privilege conferred on him; *a witness of the sufferings of Christ.* This was proper to the apostolical office, and common to all the apostles, to be witnesses of the sufferings of Christ, as well as companions of his life, and ear-witnesses of his doctrine: they were *eye-witnesses and ministers of the word.* When he told them, *It behoved Christ to suffer and rise from the dead;* he adds, *and ye are witnesses of these things.* The apostles were witnesses to him both in Jerusalem and all Judea, and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. And Peter tells the Jews, *We are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem, whom they slew and hung on a tree.* The apostle Peter was with him in the garden with the two sons of Zebedee, when he began to be sorrowful and very heavy; and fol-

lowed him *afar off to the high priests hall*, when he was there; he saw him bound and scourged, and crucified.

He testified and declared his sufferings, and preached Christ crucified unto the world: he was a witness by his doctrine of the sufferings he underwent. And he was ready to bear witness to him by his life and actions, to partake of the sufferings of Christ in his own person, and seal his testimony with his blood; he died a martyr to his religion. So our Lord fore-

told, *That when he was old he should stretch forth his hands, and another should gird him, and carry him whither he would not: This spake he signifying by what death he should glorify God, i. e. by being crucified: and this well agrees with the word μαρτυρς, martyr; and connects with the following clause; he was a partaker of his sufferings as well as of his glory; and is parallel to that expression of the apostle; If we suffer with him, we shall be also glorified together.*

Joh. xxi.
18.

Rom. viii.
17.

And this was a moving and tender consideration, that he was a witness and martyr for Christ; who not only saw his personal sufferings; but was a partaker of his sufferings in his own person. As if he had said, I exhort you who am a suffering witness of Christ, who had the honour to be one of the *chosen witnesses*

nesses of his death and resurrection; and am now ready to be offer'd up upon the sacrifice and service of your faith; who must shortly put off this my tabernacle, as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me, and have my decease in view; hear the

Rev. i. 9. words of a dying apostle, who am your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.

3. By his future hopes: a partaker of the glory which shall be revealed; that is, the glory which will be bestowed upon faithful pastors at his glorious appearance; particularly the glory of the resurrection, when the body will be redeemed from the corruption of the grave, and fashion'd like to the glorious body of Christ; and the perfection of the whole man will be entire and compleat. So he speaks of their

Chap. i. 7. being found unto praise and honour and glory, at the appearance of Christ; and of the grace which is to be brought unto

--- 13. them at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and they who are partakers of Christ's sufferings, when his glory shall be reveal-

2. iv. 13. ed, shall be glad also with exceeding joy; and the apostle calls it the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Rom. viii.
18.

He was now partaker of that glory in right and title, and in hope and expectation. He had the hope of eternal life, which God who cannot lie hath promis'd; and

and speaks of it with the same assurance, as if he had already a participation of it, and were actually enter'd into glory. Indeed he had a glimpse of the glory of Christ when he was present with him at his transfiguration, and he *received from the Father honour and glory, and there came a voice from the excellent glory:* ^{2 Ep. i. 17:} but it will be fully revealed and communicated at his appearance; for when *Christ who is our life shall appear, we shall also appear with him in glory; and when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.* And this was very proper to recommend his advice, that he was a fellow heir with them of the heavenly glory, as well as a fellow presbyter in the work of the Lord: a *brother and companion in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.* Q. D. I exhort you who have a sure title, and joyful hope of the future glory; who have no doubt of my interest, or fear of miscarriage. I am waiting my release, and expect in a little time to be in glory. Have these things in remembrance after my decease: remember my words when I am gone to heaven.

III. The *exhortation* itself: that consists of two parts; 1. The matter of the exhortation, or the duty to which he exhorts. 2. The manner of performance, prescrib'd.

§ 1. The

§ 1. The *matter* of the exhortation. And he comprehends the whole pastoral duty in two things.

1. In *feeding* the flock: *Feed the flock of God which is among you.* Christians are often represented by sheep, and the christian church or society, which is only a collection of sheep, is fitly call'd the *flock* of God. Some copies read the *flock of Christ*, which tho' it alters not the sense, carries a greater propriety; because *he* is most properly the *shepherd of the sheep*, and *God's shepherd*, who has the care of the flock committed to him. And when he says, *which is among you*, τὸ ἐξ ὑμῶν, the expression has been thought to be ambiguous, and to be capable of signifying either, the *flock which is among you*, as we render it; that is, each one must take care of his proper flock, and the particular charge committed to him; where he resides, and which he presides over: or else it may signify, *as much as in you lies*; like that expression of the apostle; *If it is possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.* 'Tis τὸ ἐν ὑμῶν, and so the sense would be; exert all your powers; use your utmost care and best endeavours. So it was first render'd by *Erasmus*, and this rendering was afterwards followed by *Calvin* and other interpreters.

Rom. xii.
18.

terpreters. The thought is ingenious, and the sense commodious: but if this were the sense, it should have been τὸ καθ' ὑμᾶς, or ἐξ ὑμῶν; for the article τὸ here does not refer to ὑμῖν, but to ποίμνιον; 'tis plainly τὸ ποίμνιον ἐν ὑμῖν, the flock which is among you; which clearly determines it to the former sense, and justifies our rendering.

Now concerning the flock, he requires the elders to *feed* it; the word is taken from shepherds, and proper to the notion of a flock; they are to take care of the flock, and perform the duty of a shepherd to it. The metaphor is borrowed from the old Testament; *I will give you pastors according to my own heart, who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding:* and again, *I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and bring them again to their fold; and I will set shepherds over them, who shall feed them.* Jer. iii. 15. 'Tis sometimes us'd of kings and civil rulers; the Lord said to Saul, *thou shalt feed my people Israel, and be captain over Israel:* and David *fed them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands:* 2 Sam. v. this was the antient use of the word, for we often read in Homer of ποιμένα λαῶν in this sense. Pf lxxviii. 72.

It comprehends the proper duty of christian ministers towards the church; they must feed them *with knowledge and understanding*; with the christian doctrine and the ordinances of the gospel, which are the proper food of the soul; and *lead them in green pastures, and besides the still waters*. Our Lord represents his doctrine as *the bread of life*; and the apostle speaks of being *nourish'd up with the words of faith and good doctrine*, and growing by the *sincere milk of the word*. We must be careful to instruct them in the knowledge of the truth, and keep *back nothing which is profitable to them*, or *shun to declare all the counsel of God*. We must insist much upon the most profitable and important truths; the great and peculiar principles and duties of christianity: and be careful to give them *sound doctrine*, or *the truth as it is in Jesus*; and to *hold fast the form of sound words*, which we have heard of the apostles, and as it lies in the scriptures; and *wholesom words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness*. In *doctrine shewing incorruptness*, and *not corrupting the word of God*, by false glosses and foreign mixtures, or speaking, in the name of the Lord, our own fancies or passions. We must not feed them *with*

Joh. x.

1 Tim. iv.
6.Act. xx.
20, 27.2 Tim. i.
13.1 Tim. vi.
3.1 Cor. ii.
17.

with empty chaff, or subtil poison; with airy unconcerning speculations, or dangerous errors, which would not edify, but do them hurt; and be like leading a flock of sheep into barren and unsavoury pastures, which, instead of nourishing, would breed a rot. We must guard them against hurtful mistakes of mind, and warn them of the snares of sin; and defend the gospel, and contend earnestly for the faith which was once deliver'd to the saints, against all opposition and assault; and by sound doctrine exhort and convince gainsayers, and so stop the mouths of those who subvert it. Tit. i. 9.

Particularly, we must feed the lambs of the flock, as our Lord directs Peter; i. e. younger and weaker christians; and suit ourselves to the state and condition of men, and their different standing and capacities in the christian life; rightly dividing the word of God, and giving every one their portion in due season; milk for babes as well as strong meat, which belongeth to them who are of full age; we must exhort and comfort and charge every one. John xxi. 15. Heb. v. 13; 1 Thes. ii. 11.

2. In taking the oversight of them. They are to take heed to the flock, as well as feed them. The word ἐπισκοπῶντες here signifies to act the part of a bishop toward them, by proper oversight and circumspection. Aet. xx. 28.

cumspedition. A shepherd must not only feed the flock, but guide them too, and direct their way and go before them, and lead them to the pasture and to the fold. And so 'tis as if he had said, You are bishops and overseers of the flock; answer your name, act as you are call'd, take the oversight of the flock committed to your care, and which is become your charge.

1 Thess. v.
12.
Heb. xiii.
7, 17.

Ministers are not only to feed the flock, to preach the gospel, and administer the ordinances of it to them; but to exercise a proper care and discipline: they who labour among them are *over them in the Lord*; and to *admonish them*. And they have the *rule over them* who *speak to them the word of God*; and to be *obeyed* and *submitted to*; and to *watch for their souls as they who must give an account*. They are guiding rulers in church affairs, and in the worship of God, who are to govern by the laws of Christ, and to be obeyed *in the Lord*. They must observe their manners and behaviour; admit to the christian communion, according to scripture-rule, upon a credible profession of faith and obedience; and reject or cast out for scandalous sins, and disorderly walk, and apostacy from the faith; and restore them upon repentance, and receive into the christian

christian society and communion again; that the christian church may be preserv'd in its purity and distinction, from the wicked and unbelieving world. They are not only to *preach the word*, but to *reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and patience*; and *reprove them sharply that they may be sound in the faith*: they must be concern'd for their welfare as those who are entrusted with the care of them, and must give an account of their behaviour towards them.

2 Tim. iv.

2.

Tit. i. 13.

'Tis one part of their proper care and oversight of the flock to ordain other ministers to this sacred office, and settle them in the christian church; to preserve a succession of ministers, and keep up the christian worship in the world. They are not only to *keep the good thing which was committed to them*; but they are to *commit the same to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also*, i. e. to persons duly qualified and disposed, according to scripture-rule and direction in the case. And they are to *ordain elders in every church, and in every city, or any town where there is a church*.

2 Tim. i.

14.

— ii. 2.

Act. xiv.

23.

Tit. i. 5.

§ 2. The *manner* prescrib'd in which these duties are to be perform'd. This is represented in a threefold remarkable antithesis; in which the apostle guards against a threefold evil to which such persons

persons are peculiarly subject, namely sloth, covetousness, and pride; and which contains a proper directory in the exercise of the pastoral office.

1. Not by *constraint*, but *willingly*. Dr. *Hammond* is singular here, and understands the first expression in an active sense; not constraining the flock by force, or using any violence towards it. But this, however true in it self, seems not the design of the apostle; for so it does not fitly connect with the following clause to which it is oppos'd; and that sense belongs to another branch of the direction given afterward. The meaning plainly is, that he would not have them act under the power of constraint, or be drawn unwillingly to the service; by the force of any external consideration, or regard to things without them, as the fear of want, or the awes of censure; or the meer terror of the divine threatening, and the wo denounced against them who preach not the gospel. 'Tis the same thing which the apostle expresses
- 1 Cor. ix. 16. — 17. by *ἀναγκῆ*; but if against my will a dispensation of the gospel is committed to me, what is my reward then? so he speaks
- 2 Cor. ix. 7. in the case of charity, of giving grudgingly, and of necessity: And he would
- Philem. iv. not have the benefit be as it were of necessity. We must not crouch under a burden,

den, or look upon it as a task impos'd upon us, and act with a reluctant and backward mind: the reason is, that what is done by constraint, and of necessity, will never be rightly done. We shall never act, upon this principle, with vigour and zeal, or suitable to the nature of our work. We shall be easily *mov'd* and *terrified* by every difficulty and discouragement in our way, and act with coldness and indifference, and do no more then needs must; and never be able to support any life in our administrations, or preserve a resolution and constancy of mind.

On the contrary, it must be *willingly*, in opposition to force and constraint. It must be with our own choice, and with freedom and liberty of mind. We must act with unforc'd consent, upon rational motives and due conviction of mind, in the undertaking; and engage in the service as a free will offering to Christ, who has loved us at so great an expence; and with a sincere concern for the interests of his kingdom, and the good of the souls of men. And we must act in it with cheerfulness of mind, and as those who take a pleasure in it; with the clearest satisfaction, and the highest delight. We must act in all the parts of our work from no other *constraints*, but those

those of the love of Christ, and zeal for his glory; from the kindly endearments of mercy, and the powerful sense of duty and obligation. This the apostle represents by the opposite word *ἑκων*, *but if I do, this willingly I have a reward*; and the *cheerful giver* is oppos'd to him, who giveth *grudgingly*, and of *necessity*; and he would have the benefit be *not of necessity, but willingly*. The next direction is

2. Not of *filthy lucre*, but of a *ready mind*. It must not be of *filthy lucre*: not from the secular advantages to be gained by it, as reputation and esteem in the world, or the profits and perquisites of the office; because pastors were to have *double honour* and maintainance. This is a low and mean consideration upon which to act, in so great a trust, and will never rise higher than the principle from whence it springs; as the waters rise not above their level, or the spring head from whence they flow. The prophet denounces a curse, *Wo to the shepherds of Israel, who feed themselves and not the flock; should not the shepherds feed the flock? Ye eat the fat, and clothe ye with the wooll*. The apostle requires that a bishop be not *greedy of filthy lucre*; and he says of the false teachers, that they *subverted whole houses, teaching things*

Ez. xxxiv.
23.

Tit. i. 7.

— 11.

*things which they ought not, i. e. false doctrines, humouring them in their errors and vices; for filthy lucre sake, * or their own worldly advantage. And he speaks of men of corrupt minds, destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness; who us'd their religion to serve their worldly ends.* 1 Tim. v. 6.

In opposition to this, it must be of a *ready mind*; *προθυμῶς*. 'Tis the same word he uses of the *Corinthians* bounty to the poor christians; the *declaration of your ready mind*, *προθυμίας ὑμῶν*. They were to act in all the service they performed, and all the difficulty and danger which attended it, from a sincere good will and propensity of mind to the welfare of the flock; as those who were well affected towards them, and intent upon their good; not upon their own gain, or any sinister and secular design. 2 Cor. viii. 19.

Ministers must act clearly in their sacred work; not from the sordid love of gain, tho' they have a right to be maintained, but from a sincere affection to the souls of men, and an hearty concern for the good of the church. They must act with noble and generous views, with a disinterested and self-denying zeal; and

* Quasi præsentiens Ecclesiae pestem hinc orituram.
Erasmi. Annot.

Act. xx.
 23.
 2 Cor. xii.
 14.
 1 Theff. ii.
 8.

be able to say, I have *coveted no man's silver and gold; and I seek not your's, but you*; and being *affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to impart, not only the gospel, but our own souls*. They act a mean and unworthy part, below the dignity of their office, and with a spirit utterly unsuitable to it, who instead of *naturally caring for their state; seek their own, and not the things which are Jesus Christ's*. Who first make a property of the people, and then a prey of them; who hunt after preferments, and heap up one upon another; make a trade of their sacred employment, and prostitute it to the meanest purposes; and seem to design nothing higher, than to enrich their families, and make their fortunes in the world. But I think, under other disadvantages, our circumstances pretty generally set us out of the danger of this temptation.

Philip. ii.
 20.

3. Not as *Lords of God's heritage*, but *examples to the flock*. They are not to be *Lords of God's heritage*; *μὴ δ' ὡς κατακυριεύοντες τῶν κλήρων*. The word *κλήρα* from whence the *English* word *clergy* is derived, is here us'd of the christian community, or flock of God, in distinction from the presbyters or bishops; however it came in after ages, to change its application, and to be us'd of

of

of presbyters, or ministers, in distinction from the people; and is a flagrant instance of the arbitrary use of words, and abuse of sounds. The christian people are God's *clergy* in the scripture stile; and bishops and presbyters, *ministers by whom they believe, and helpers of their joy, and their servants for Jesus sake.*

The word signifies a lot or heritage, in allusion to the people of Israel, who are so called; *The Lord hath taken you and brought you forth — to be to him a people of inheritance.* And, *they are thy people and thy inheritance.* They fall to him as it were by lot, and are peculiar and dear to him as an heritage. And every flock of God was a lot or heritage, as it was the peculiar charge of the presbyter or bishop, who was to feed and take the oversight of it: as the land of *Canaan* was divided into lots among the several tribes. And so the antient *Greek* scholiast understood it, τὸν κληρὸν ἱερὸν σύστημα καλεῖ, the sacred conventus, or christian community. Indeed, Dr. *Whit-* Deut. iv.
20.
— ix. 29.

by has a peculiar sense of it, who understands by it the possessions of the church, because the word is sometimes us'd in *Greek* Authors, and by the LXX in the old testament in that sense; and so he understands here, the inheritances sold for the use of the poor, and put into the bishops

hands to be dispos'd among them. And then the sense would be, that they were to look upon themselves as *stewards*, and not *lords* of the heritage, and to dispose of the publick revenues, without avarice and partiality; not with arbitrary humour, or without regard to the difference of circumstance or reason of the case; as there was a *murmuring of the Greeks against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration*. And so indeed they did in the extraordinary case of the first christians; when they *had all things in common, they sold their possessions, and brought the price, and laid it down at the apostles feet; and distribution was made to every man according as he had need*. But as this word is never us'd in this sense in the new testament; so wherever a christian church was settled, there was another order of ministry by divine appointment, for that purpose, that is deacons, who were to *serve tables*, and take care of the poor, while they *gave themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word*; and who are particularly described in the Epistles to *Timothy* and *Titus*. Besides, that this sense would fall in with what he had just before mention'd, *not of filthy lucre*, and is not likely to be intended in this expression, where

Act. vi. 2,
3, 4.

— iv. 3.
4.

where he is plainly giving another direction.

Now with reference to this heritage he requires that presbyters or bishops should not *lord it over them*; that is in the general, carry it in a lordly manner, or exercise an imperious behaviour towards them; because they are God's heritage and property, and not theirs; God retains his own right, and has appointed them ministers and shepherds of the flock, to take care of them; not masters and lords, to rule them by their will, or with any rigour. Thus particularly, they must not rule them by force, or exercise a tyranny over them; for they govern volunteers, and those who freely consent; and have no power of constraint, or violence, which is most abhorrent to the nature of their office, and the genius of the gospel. God threatens the shepherds, who instead of *strengthening the diseased, and healing the sick, and binding up that which is broken, and bringing again that which was driven away; ruled over them with force, and with cruelty*. And our Lord marks out the difference between his spiritual kingdom, and the kingdoms of this world; *ye know the princes of the gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they who are great, exercise authority over them; but it shall not be*

Ez. xxxiv.

4.

Matt. xx.

25.

be so among you ; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister. And he reproaches the scribes and pharisees for their hypocrisy, who bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be born, and lay them on mens shoulders, but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

— xxiii.
4.

Nor must they impose unnecessary things, or make any thing necessary which the law of Christ has left at liberty ; or lay a yoke upon the necks of the disciples, when he has freed them from the jewish yoke ; and introduce a new law of commandments contained in ordinances, when he has abolish'd the old one ; and we are required to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. The apostle himself declares, *not that we have dominion over your faith, ** or require you to believe without sufficient authority ; and was careful, *not to abuse his power in the gospel, or the authority which was given for edification, and not for destruction.* And when some of the jewish converts taught the necessity of circumcision to the salvation of the gentile christians, the whole college of apostles met at Jerusalem, un-

2 Cor. i.
24.

1 Cor. ix.
18.

* Προαιρέσιως ᾧ ἐστὶν ἡ πίστις, καὶ οὐδεὶς ἀναγκάζει πιστεῦσαι τὸν μὴ βεβλόμενον. Theoph. in loc.

der the guidance of the holy Ghost, came to this determination, to lay *no greater burden upon them than a few necessary things*; and carefully avoided enjoining any burdensom rites, or ensnaring canons. Act. xv. i. 28.

On the other hand, they were to be *ensamples to the flock*; τύποι γινόμενοι, types or exemplars; patterns for their imitation. They were to be the *types*, and the people the *antitypes*, which were to answer to them. They were not to rule them with rigour, or use any other force but that of example; they were to go before them in the same way, in which they directed them to walk, and be *followers of them as they were of Christ*; as fair copies of the great original. This the apostle requires concerning himself. *Brethren, be followers together with me, and mark those who walk so, as you have us for an example.* And he appeals to the consciences of the people, as well as to God; *Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly, and unblamably, we have behaved ourselves among you who believe; and, you know what manner of men we were among you for your sake, and you became followers of us and of the Lord.* And he gives it in charge to Timothy; *Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an ensample to the believer* Philip. iii. 17.

I Thess. ii. 10.
— i. 5.

1 Ep. iv. *believer in word, in conversation, in cha-*
 12.
 Ep. ii. 7. *rity, in spirit, in faith, in purity: and*
to Titus, in all things shew thy self a
pattern of good works; where the word
is the same all along. We must be care-
ful to lead, as well as direct them in all
the paths of truth and righteousness, and
set them an example of holy conversation
and godliness; recommend the excellen-
cy and power of the doctrine we preach,
by transcribing it into our lives; and
shew that we believe ourselves, and are
in good earnest, by the influence it has
upon our own souls. This is the sacred
directory for the work and the spirit of
a christian pastor, or minister of the gos-
pel. Nothing now remains but

IV. The encouraging *motive* here pro-
 pos'd, in v. 4. *And when the chief shep-*
herd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown
of life which fadeth not away. This is
 the great inducement and encouragement
 to answerable diligence and concern of
 mind; and what ought to animate and
 support under all the difficulties and
 trouble which arise. Q. D. Though
 your work be great, and difficulties many
 in the faithful discharge of it, tho' you
 should not meet with answerable success,
 or suitable reward from men, yet you
 shall have a glorious and abundant re-
 ward hereafter; and greater than the
 false

false apostles and teachers can pretend to, in the pleasing of men, or any worldly advantage. I shall propose and urge it briefly in its distinct parts, and conclude.

1. The *character* under which our Lord is represented; *he is the chief shepherd*. He represents himself as the *good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep*; and who *knows his own sheep, and is known of his*. And the apostle represents him as the *great shepherd of the sheep*. He is the chief, or head shepherd, who owns the sheep; all others are under shepherds appointed and employed by him: they receive all their power from him, and exercise it in his name; they are subject to his laws, and accountable to him. All presbyters or bishops are under the direction of the *great shepherd and bishop of souls*; and are to act according to the rules he has prescribed, and in a constant dependence upon him. Own your subjection to the great Lord and Head of the church. Consider yourselves, not *as lords of the heritage*, but as *servants of Christ, and ministers of the church*. Be careful to act a faithful part, and discharge the trust repos'd in you, as those who stand in a nearer relation to Christ, and are under special obligations to his service; keep close to

John x.
12.

Heb. xiii.
20.

1 Pet. ii.
25.

the rule of his word in all your service and ministrations, as those who *call no man master* upon earth; and know that *one is your master even Christ*. Keep your minds under a constant sense of the authority of Christ, and the encouragements of his gracious presence with you in all the difficulties of the way.

2. The *account* he will take of their service: *The chief shepherd will appear*: i. e. He will return again into this world, and come to judgment. He who instituted this office, and appointed the proper work of it, will come to call them to an account: *The Lord of those servants will come and reckon with them*. In this sense the expression is us'd in the new testament, *Looking for the blessed hope, and glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*. And the apostle *Peter* speaks of the *tryal of faith which will be found unto praise at the appearing of Jesus Christ*. He will appear at last with great personal glory, and to the perfection of his undertaking: *To them who look for him shall he appear the second time without sin, unto salvation*. And when he shall appear, we must give our account to him, for all our talents and trusts; for every gift receiv'd, and every opportunity of use and improvement. He will take an account of our diligence

Tit. ii. 13.

1 Pet. i. 7.

Heb. ix.
28.

diligence and behaviour; how we have acted in our place, and what we have done for his glory; with what temper and spirit, and by what principles and views. So the apostle solemnly charges *Timothy*, *I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearance and kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, and out of season.* And he says, *They watch for your souls as they who must give an account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief.* ^{2 Tim. iv. 1.} ^{Heb. xiii. 17.}

Consider often the certainty of his appearance, and the strictness of the account; act under the awes of a final reckoning, as entrusted and accountable creatures, who must *give an account of your stewardship when you must be no longer stewards.* Preach the word as those who must be judged; *persuade* other men, as those who *know the terror of the Lord* yourselves: live and act as they who believe we must all *appear before the judgment seat of Christ.* Keep the final account always in view, and act under the influence of a firm persuasion and believing foresight of it.

3. The excellency of the future reward: *they will receive a crown of life.* This will be the reward of faithful pas-

tors who act suitably to the character they bear, and the directions here laid down. The expression alludes to the crowns which were worn in times of public festival, and great joy; and by those who won the prize in the olympiac games, or return'd home with victory and conquest. Christ is the *ἑρμῆς*: the judge of their labour and conflict, and they who are faithful in his service, and overcome, shall carry away the prize: he will award the crown to them. The prophet tells us in the old testament; *they who are wise, i. e. wise to win souls*, and so 'tis rendered in the margin, *teachers*; shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they who turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever. And the apostle encourages himself with this prospect; *I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, and kept the faith; henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge will give at that day.* And 'tis promis'd to all the faithful: *Be thou faithful unto the death, and I will give thee a crown of life.* 'Tis a crown of glory and righteousness, and life.

He will bestow a glorious and excellent reward upon all his faithful servants; and a distinguishing and eminent degree of glory upon faithful ministers: they shall shine

Dan. xii.
3.

2 Tim. iv.
7.

Rev. ii.
10.

shine as the *brightness of the firmament*, and as the *stars for ever and ever*; and *differ from other stars in glory*, as they did in the orb in which they moved. Look then to the *crown of life*, and the *joy which is set before you*, to encourage and animate, under all your difficulty and toil: fetch in fresh vigour, from the views of the future reward; *therefore labour and suffer reproach, as those who* ^{2 Tim. iv. 10.} *trust in the living God*, or have a firm confidence of the *promise of the life that is to come*, and of the future salvation. Both act and endure as those who have *respect unto the recompence of reward*; and who *see him who is invisible*. Nothing can have greater weight than this consideration, and in some circumstances of our case, nothing is sufficient but this.

4. The *duration* and continuance of it: It is a *crown which fadeth not away*. This is the singular and distinguishing excellence of the future glory; that the crown will be not only unspeakably bright and glorious, but it will be ever fresh, and never fade and decay. So 'tis oppos'd to those crowns which were given to the conquerours in wars and publick games, which were made of wreaths of lawrel, and fading flowers: *Now they* ^{1 Cor. ix. 25.} *do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible*. 'Tis an unfading crown,

Chap. i. 4. crown, the word is ἀμαράντινον, which is explained in *Hesychius* by ἀώπτον, which cannot corrupt; and is equivalent to the description of the heavenly blessedness, *an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and which never fadeth away*, ἀμάραντον. The final blessedness will be eternal; no length of time will breed the least decay, or any dislike; it will remain in full vigour and verdure to all eternity; and be ever fresh, and ever green.

And what encouragement and comfort may be deriv'd from hence under all the difficulties in the way? Our labour and trouble are but for a short space, but the crown of glory *fadeth not away*. What is a whole life of service and suffering, to the future recompence of reward, and the gift of eternal life? *The present light afflictions are but for a moment*, but there is an *exceeding and eternal weight of glory*; and the *sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory which is to be revealed*. Faithful diligence in present service will meet with an ample reward hereafter; they who *rule well* in the house of God, will not only be counted worthy of *double honour*, now; but be made *rulers over many cities* in the kingdom of heaven. Let us not be *weary of well doing*, or look back when we have put our hand to the plough:

plough: Seeing we have this ministry, as ^{2 Cor. iv.} we have obtained mercy, let us faint not. ^{1.}

Let us not tire or be discouraged by the labour and conflict of the present state, for there awaits us a crown of immortal life; and we shall *reap if we faint not.* How grand and august will the appearance be when every faithful pastor of the christian church, will appear like *Joshua* the high priest, arrayed with all his priestly garments, and *crowns of gold and sil-* ^{Zach. vi.} *ver upon his head:* Each one shall *sit down* ^{11.} *with the lamb on his throne, be clothed with white robes, bear palms in his hands, and a crown of glory upon his head.* They will be made *kings and priests* unto God and the Father, and they who were the *pillar and ground of the truth* in the church of the living God, shall be made *pillars in the temple of God* above, and go out *no more for ever.*

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